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## **‘Railway Derby’: occupational community, paternalism and corporate culture 1850–90**

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper examines the extent to which the Midland Railway workforce in nineteenth-century Derby constituted some form of occupational community. Evidence for this paper is drawn from Midland Railway Company (MR) records combined with census data and other documentary and textual material. It explores the social and domestic world of employees at the Midland Railway Company’s headquarters and critically examines the construction of community in both functional and symbolic terms.

### **Issues and perspectives**

Many studies of the railway workforce have focused on railway towns such as Crewe and Swindon.<sup>1</sup> Substantially built for the railways and largely populated by railway employees these locations do not prove suitable for a critical examination of the railway workforce as either an affective or merely functional occupational community. Such railway towns were the exception rather than the rule in terms of place of residence for railway workers. Most railway workers lived around the system close to depots, stations and workshops in a wide variety of urban and rural locations. They represent the most visible examples of company welfare provision and because of the concentration of workers and dominance of the company they can tell us relatively little about the extent to which the behaviour of railway workers in wider social and family life was based on a ‘felt’ sense of community rather than simply demonstrating the effects of residential concentration. Towns with substantial railway populations set within a broader manufacturing base

\* I would like to thank Steve King for his help with earlier drafts of this article.

<sup>1</sup> See for example, W.H. Chaloner, *The Social and Economic Development of Crewe, 1780–1923* (Manchester, 1950); K. Hudson, ‘The early years of the railway community in Swindon’, *Transport History*, 1 (1968), 130–52; B.J. Turton, ‘The railway towns of southern England’, *Transport History*, 2 (1969), 105–35; B. Barker, ‘The concept of the railway town and the growth of Darlington 1801–1911: a note’, *Transport History*, 2, 3 (1970), 283–92; D. Drummond, ‘Crewe – the society and culture of a railway town 1842–1914’, (unpublished University of London Ph.D. thesis), esp. ch. 6; also idem, *Crewe: Railway Town, Company and People 1840–1914* (Aldershot, 1995).

like York, Darlington or Derby are in many ways equally atypical of the overall experience of railway work. However, they do provide an opportunity to study the social and cultural dynamics of railway work as an occupational community within the sort of contested and heterogeneous urban environment which for example stimulated research in the 'new paternalism' of the post-1850 period.<sup>2</sup>

Since the 1980s labour history has increasingly moved away from a narrow concern with the labour process towards a concern with work in its broader social context. Studies of the historical meanings of work have demonstrated the extent to which power relationships in the workplace, struggles over control and definitions of skill in the labour process, issues of status, hierarchy and identification can best be understood in the context of social, economic and political structures and relations which lie as much outside as within the workplace. Several key social characteristics of Victorian society which connect work and wider social life are important for an understanding of railway workers as an occupational community. Railway companies have sometimes been characterized as paternalistic, defined as a set of reciprocal ties between workers and owners which implicated the whole of family and social life in the responsibilities and obligations of the workplace.<sup>3</sup> It is certainly true that many railway companies provided their workforce with a measure of health, welfare and educational provision, and a degree of security of employment which was rare in other industries. However, the great geographical extent, numerically large workforce, military bureaucratic authority structures and status as joint stock companies clearly set railway companies and their social relations aside from the paternal family-run firm.<sup>4</sup> Railway work and some grades in particular, locomotive drivers, guards, workshop artisans, station masters and

<sup>2</sup> Though a caricature, it is useful to distinguish between factory paternalism of the early textile factory masters and the so-called 'new paternalism' associated with the period 1850–74. The former was arguably concerned with building and regularizing a rural workforce into the disciplines of factory production (see, for example, S. Pollard, 'The factory village in the industrial revolution', *English Historical Review*, LXXIX (1964), 513–31 and idem, *The Genesis of Modern Management* (London, 1968), 231–42). The latter was more concerned with negotiating an ideology of co-operation between classes and engendering a particular urban culture of social harmony (see P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England* (London, 1982)).

<sup>3</sup> See N. Abercrombie and S. Hill, 'Paternalism and patronage', *British Journal of Sociology*, 27, 4 (1976), 413–27; G.M. Norris, 'Industrial paternalist capitalism and local labour markets', *Sociology*, 12 (1978), 469–89; Joyce, *Work Society and Politics*; D. Smith, *The Perils of Paternalism: Case Studies from Chicago and Birmingham*, Social Innovation Research Group Working Paper, Aston University, Apr. 1989 and idem, 'Paternalism, craft and organizational rationality 1830–1930: an exploratory model', *Urban History*, 19, 2 (1992), 211–28.

<sup>4</sup> In the context of paternalism, Joyce argued that the 'military bureaucratic' model of control on the railways was never remotely as effective in generating company loyalty as the single family firm: Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*, 136. See also F. McKenna, 'Victorian railway workers', *History Workshop*, 1 (1976), 26–73 and R. Price, *Labour in British Society: An Interpretive History* (London, 1986), 121.

administrative staff, for example, were widely held as exemplars of 'respectability' within Victorian society. Respectability linked work-based status with a variety of social, economic and cultural practices, sobriety, thrift, cleanliness, domesticity, education and self-help. Though the concept of a 'labour aristocracy' has long since been discredited as an explanatory concept for mid-Victorian social harmony, railway workers were often up held in public as exemplars of good conduct. The combination of bureaucratic and paternal workplace relations suggest the shaping of a very distinctive sense of occupational identity in the nineteenth-century railway industry.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the extent to which a sense of respectability drew on material and social resources generated in the workplace has distinct implications for the institutions and practices of community and social life in 'Railway Derby'.

As sociologists have shown, community is an elusive idea open to a wide variety of definitions and usages.<sup>6</sup> For the study of occupational community, perhaps the most useful defining concept is that community involves people knowing and interacting with each other in a variety of work-based and non-work-based social situations. Colleagues and work-mates became known as 'whole' people even if this does not necessarily imply that informal social and family relationships are entirely carried over into all formal or workplace settings.<sup>7</sup> Yet occupational community can be simply functional, a matter of residential concentration in which the very fact that people live close together for the purposes of their employment generates social interaction. Such functional communities may or may not imply some form of community of feeling. Occupational community may also be a matter of choice in which social interaction between fellow workers and their families is based on affective ties to the workplace, and/or a sense of company loyalty and/or some form of communal sentiment amongst the workforce. However, even used in this sense, community does not necessarily imply social harmony and lack of conflict within the social group, or even a widely agreed set of values. In one of the more useful theoretical reflections on the subject the anthropologist Anthony Cohen focuses on the symbols around which social groupings cohere into some form of community.<sup>8</sup> Such symbolic

<sup>5</sup> G. Revill, 'Working the system: journeys through corporate culture in the "railway age"', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 12 (1994), 714–17.

<sup>6</sup> The Community Studies literature has not generated a great deal of useful theoretical debate in recent years: for historical research see A. Macfarlane, 'History, anthropology and the study of communities', *Social History*, 2 (1977), 631–52; C. Calhoun, 'Community: towards variable conceptualization for comparative research', *Social History*, 3 (1978), 126; J.D. Marshall, 'The study of local and regional communities', *Northern History*, 17 (1981), 203–30. Most useful are R.J. Dennis and S. Daniels, 'Community and the social geography of Victorian cities', *Urban History Yearbook* (1981), 7–23; and R. Pearson, 'Knowing one's place: perceptions of community in the industrial suburb of Leeds, 1790–1890', *Journal of Social History*, 27, 2 (1993), 221–44.

<sup>7</sup> G. Salaman, *Community and Occupation* (Cambridge, 1974); idem, *Working* (London, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> A.P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London, 1985). See also A.P. Cohen,

rallying points might include particular social practices and institutions like churches, chapels, unions and friendly societies; specific icons, whether they are monuments, images, symbols or particular charismatic individuals; and shared elements of culture, language, vocabulary and life experience. He argues that whilst communities may appear to give the appearance of cohesiveness when individuals and groups invoke particular social markers to define the cores, peripheries and boundaries of identity, we should not assume that the deployment of a common set of symbolic resources implies that these symbols mean the same thing to all those involved. Symbols by their very nature are open for a multiplicity of interpretations and commonality of usage may easily disguise a multiplicity of motivations, aims and aspirations. This is not to suggest that a sense of community is merely a romantic fiction in a real world of competitive individuals but rather that to some degree, tension, contradiction and the strategic use of cultural and social resources may be intrinsic to the functioning of many if not all communities.

Historians of railway work recognize that there were strong intergrade and interdepartmental rivalries in the industry. Lack of perceived common interest, for example, inhibited the development of railway trade-unionism throughout the nineteenth century. By the 1870s, the size and extent of railway operations, the hierarchical chains of authority and generalized nature of workplace surveillance, the formalities of bureaucracy, competitive career structures and company incentive schemes combined to produce a complex sense of identification in the workplace. Apparently centripetal forces fused with a range of centrifugal forces, including welfare measures, company discipline and a widely disseminated public service ethos to join railway workers together as an occupational community as much by mutual mistrust as by any sense of common purpose. Quite distinctively amongst the larger British railway headquarters, Derby combined all the functions of railway construction, servicing management and operation in one single location. It therefore provides an opportunity to examine the entire range of railway-based occupations within a single urban context. If Derby provides evidence of occupational community amongst its railway workforce, this is against a background of sectional interests and experiences. This is most useful in so far as it throws into sharper focus those social practices, relations and sources of communal identification which enable us to identify 'Railway Derby' as a distinct occupational community.

The article has three main sections: after a short historical introduction to Derby and the railway district of Litchurch, the following two sections examine both functional and symbolic evidence for occupational community within the Derby railway workforce. First, this is at the level of

residential and household structure and second at the level of social, religious, educational and sporting activities.

### **Derby, Litchurch and the Midland Railway**

A county town in the industrial English midlands, Derby was already an important industrial centre by 1839 when the railway headquarters were established. The workshops, company offices and residential district for MR employees were centred on the Litchurch district to the south-west of the town centre and this area came to be known as 'Railway Derby'. Yet even this was not just a railway factory settlement. An area of pre-existing large middle-class villa residences, the district subsequently developed social structure and a variety of industries including textiles and metalworking largely independent of the railway industry. When the railway opened, this part of Derby was still dominated by the textile industry accounting for 24 per cent of the employed population in 1851. Though the percentage employed in textiles had declined by 1881 the area still had a strong industrial base very largely independent of the railway company. This included iron foundries, the Derby Crown China works, the mechanized printing works of Messrs Bemrose, paint manufacture based on the town's lead industry, and numerous silk, lace, boot and shoe factories, a rope walk, carriage manufactory, boat building, building contractors and timber yards. During the period 1841–81 the population of Litchurch grew from 865 to 18,507, whilst between 1851 and 1881 the percentage of people employed by the railway rose from 19 per cent to 33 per cent. Two of the most important acts of urban paternalism were located amongst the suburban villas of the nascent railway district of Litchurch. These were the Derby Infirmary and the Derby Arboretum, a model of rational recreation.<sup>9</sup> Thus any form of occupational community would have to be formed across the terrain of a dynamic and already mature urban industrial environment. 'Railway Derby' was most certainly not a newly built factory community like Crewe or Swindon.

The MR do not appear very active as community builders either within Derby or elsewhere on the system and evidence suggests they were even less welfare-minded than other major railway companies. The deficiencies in the MR's welfare policy may be partly explained

<sup>9</sup> The Strutt family were cotton manufacturers and long dominant in Derby social and political life: R.S. Fitton and A.P. Wadsworth, *The Strutts and the Arkwrights, 1750–1830* (Manchester, 1958); M.A. Crane, 'Education and improvement in nineteenth-century Derby' (unpublished University of Leeds M.A. thesis, 1981); A.F. Chadwick, 'Derby Mechanics Institute 1825–1880' (unpublished University of Manchester M.A. thesis, 1971); S. Ford, 'Designing for rational recreation: the creation of Derby arboretum', *East Midland Geographer*, 12, 1 and 2 (1989), 26–33; C.L. Hacker, 'William Strutt of Derby (1756–1830)', *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society*, 80 (1960), 49–70; and A. Delves, 'Popular recreation and social conflict in Derby, 1800–1850', in E. Yeo and S. Yeo (eds), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1850–1914* (Brighton, 1981).

by the Company's ambitious and expensive expansion plans and the financial crisis which heralded the formation of the Company in 1844.<sup>10</sup> By the 1870s the MR had gained a reputation as 'ambitious and aggressive'.<sup>11</sup> The amalgamation of the three constituent companies into the Midland Railway in 1844 brought in a period of financial stringency curtailing any plans to engage in further provision for its workers within Derby. In fact, the MR inherited its only substantial block of housing from one of its constituents, the North Midland Railway in 1844 brought in a period of financial stringency curtailing any plans to engage in further provision for its workers within Derby. In fact, the MR inherited its only substantial block of housing from one of its constituents, the North Midland Railway. With the exception of six houses later converted to offices, no others were built by or for the Midland Railway Company in the town. By far the largest hospital subscription by the MR was to Derby Infirmary. However, evidence of other welfare provision in Derby is noticeably absent. Unlike the GWR in Swindon or LNWR in Crewe, the MR constructed no schools, did not provide a purpose-built Literary Institute until 1894 and did not construct any Company churches or chapels. Like other railway companies the MR had a Friendly Society for its workers begun under the more philanthropic NMR regime. In 1869 the Company initiated a Superannuation Scheme, though this was only open to salaried staff excluding the substantial body of workers on piece and sub-contract work in the workshops. In 1873, according to the Royal Commission on Friendly Societies, MR accident pay was £3,040 whereas the

<sup>10</sup> This certainly seems to be borne out in terms of housing policy. The first spending cuts in 1841 resulted in the dismissal of the architect Francis Thompson and the cessation of building plans in Derby: R. Lloyd, *Railway Station Architecture* (London, 1977), 11. The rapid expansion of the system resulted in severe accommodation shortages, issues of cost resulted in the shelving of plans to build worker housing at depots around the system in the early 1870s and 1882: PRO RAIL 491/Locomotive Committee Minutes 3282, 9574, 9803. In 1892 the MR had a total of 2,119 workers' cottages for 52,000 men accommodating just 4% of the workforce. In rough comparison the LBSCR housed 10% of its workforce in 1871: P.W. Kingsford, *Victorian Railwaymen: The Emergence and Growth of Railway Labour 1830–1870* (London, 1970), 126–7.

<sup>11</sup> F.S. Williams, *The Midland Railway: Its Rise and Progress* (London, 1876) was largely written to celebrate the completion of the Company's London extension. Between 1849 and 1876 management expansion plans transformed the Company from an amalgamation of three regional lines into a network of national extent. That Williams' history of the Company was written as an apologia for its conduct is revealed in his 'Defence of Midland policy', when he states: 'It has become a fashion in certain quarters to assert that this company has become "ambitious and aggressive", consumed with a greed of power that has led it to encroach upon the rights of innocent and injured neighbours' (p. 242). In 1888 a deputation of MR drivers claimed that 'The Midland Company is widely recognised as the most authoritarian regime of any Railway Company in the British Isles': 'Memorial to Railwaymen from Workmen at the Midland railway' (1881), Webb Collection, British Library of Political and Economic Science. See also C. Stretton, *The History of the Midland Railway* (London, 1901) and E.C. Barnes, *The Rise of the Midland Railway 1844–1874* (London, 1966); G. Channon, 'A nineteenth-century investment decision: the Midland Railway's London extension', *Economic History Review*, 25 (1972), 448–70.

Company's subsidy was only £1,000. The Commissioners concluded that: 'the Company's donation is very far from making up to the society for the special risks and liabilities of so dangerous an occupation'.<sup>12</sup> During the 1870s when the Railway Servants Orphanage was opened in Derby, operated by a charitable institution of national status, the MR as a company consistently distanced itself from the venture by refusing any form of subscription, even though the dependants of MR workers were to benefit substantially from its charity.<sup>13</sup> This suggests that any mechanisms which created an occupational community in Derby owed little to the direct purposive activities of company policy.

As the railway network expanded, so the MR workforce in Derby grew with major expansions in plant and labour taking place from the 1860s through to the 1880s. In 1851 the Company employed about 600 workers in Derby, and this had risen to 5,000 in 1878 and 10,290 by 1891.<sup>14</sup> By the 1870s there were over 1,000 clerical, administrative and office workers working for the Company in Derby, in addition to artisan and labouring grades working in traffic and engineering departments. It was only with the expansion of the Midland network in the 1860s and 1870s that the Derby headquarters grew into an extensive complex. A new Carriage and Wagon works was set up on mechanized American principles and opened in 1878. This expansion of servicing facilities coincided with the extension of the MR main line to London and the construction of the Settle-Carlisle line giving the Company a direct route to Scotland.

By 1891 the workshops employed in excess of 7,500, the largest proportion of MR workers in the town, clerical workers amounted to about 2,000 whilst the number of workers actually involved with the direct operation of the railway was no more than 5–600. About 20 per cent of the company's total workforce was employed in Derby: this included about 85 per cent of workshop staff and 40 per cent of salaried, clerical and supervisory staff. Thus the railway suburb of Derby was home to a wide social spectrum of railway workers within a dynamic and developing industrial suburb whose size and structure changed substantially over the period from 1840 to 1900.

<sup>12</sup> F. McKenna, *The Railway Workers 1840–1970* (London, 1980), 38.

<sup>13</sup> G. Revill, 'Liberalism and paternalism: politics and corporate culture in "Railway Derby" 1865–75', *Social History*, 24, 2 (1999), 203–7.

<sup>14</sup> There are no overall reliable figures for the Midland Railway workforce in Derby; those here are assembled from the following sources: manuscript census returns, 1861, 1871 and 1881; Williams, *Midland Railway*; T.G. Clayton, 'The Midland Railway Carriage and Wagon Works at Derby', *Transactions of the Chesterfield and Derbyshire Institute of Mining, Civil and Mechanical Engineers* (1881–82), 216–40; S.W. Johnson, 'The Midland Railway Locomotive Works at Derby', *Transactions of the Chesterfield and Derbyshire Institute of Mining, Civil and Mechanical Engineers* (1881–82), 206–15; and C.H. Jones, 'The Midland Railway Works at Derby', *English Illustrated Magazine* (1892–93), 673–87.



### Residential patterns and household structure

A number of factors related to functional residential patterning and household structure may give some indication of the strength of social ties within the railway workforce in Derby. This section begins by examining the residential structure of the railway workforce in Derby and then continues by looking at other indicators of occupational community at the family level. These include marriage patterns and the extent to which son followed father into employment at the Midland Railway Company.

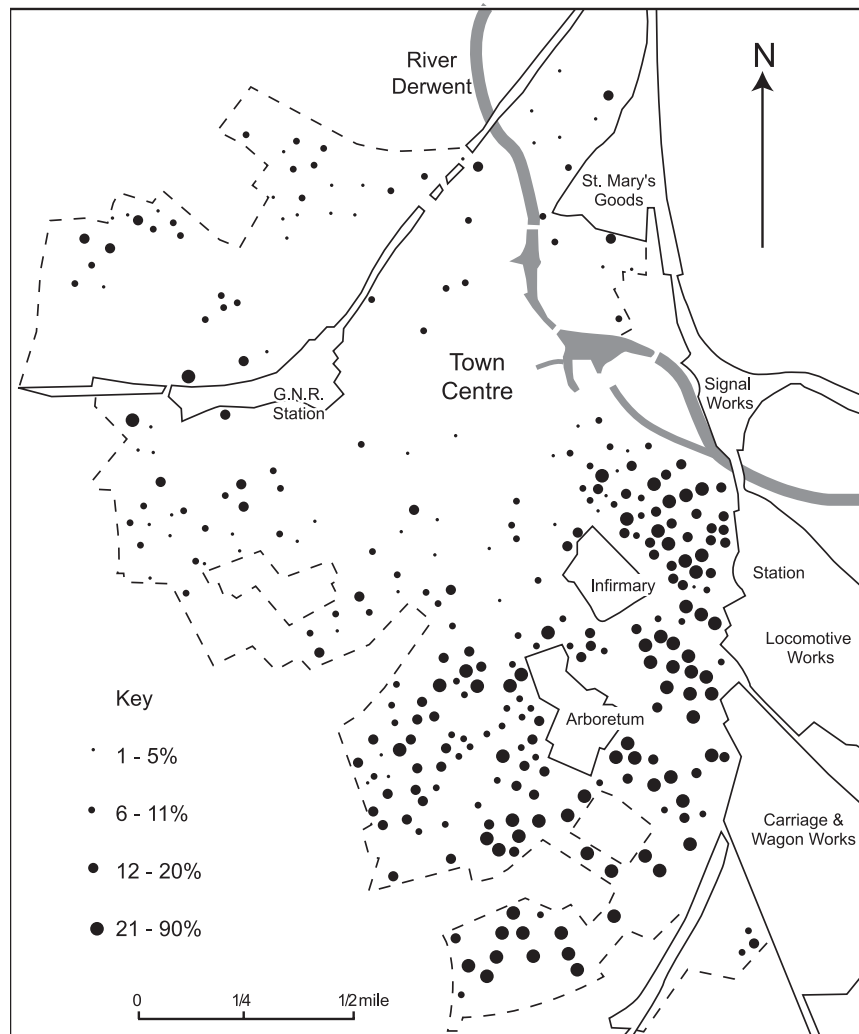
It is clear from an analysis of head of household occupations given in *Bulmer's Street Directory of Derby 1886* and a subsequent 10 per cent household survey of the census enumerators schedules for 1851 and 1881 that the railway workforce in Derby was highly concentrated into the Litchurch area (Figure 1).<sup>15</sup> The Census enumerators books for 1881 for the section of the town south of the London Road-Osmaston Road junction suggest that about 4,500 railway workers lived here (Figure 2). As the MR employed about 6,500 at Derby at this date this area accounts for around 69 per cent of the Company's Derby-based workforce. In 1881 only 14 per cent of railwaymen lived in households where the head was not also a railway worker and the figure for 1851 is only slightly higher at 17 per cent.<sup>16</sup> Evidence from local newspapers suggests that the presence of the railway formed a significant incentive to property developers and speculators.<sup>17</sup> The built-up area between the Siddals and London Road shows an increase in the total number of houses as the backs of plots were developed as courts and yards.<sup>18</sup> However, there is also clear evidence of the railway workforce living well outside the Litchurch district.

<sup>15</sup> Data on place of residence, occupation and household structure are derived from an analysis of every tenth household from the census enumerators schedules for the southern part of Derby at 1881 and a 100 per cent household survey of the schedules for 1851. The study area was chosen from an analysis of the density of railway occupations recorded in *Bulmer's Street Directory of Derby 1886*, which covered a high percentage of heads of households. From this it was decided to concentrate on all enumeration districts south of Traffic Street, which was situated on the edge of the main commercial district of the town. A double check for 1851 using a one in ten head of household survey for the whole of Derby derived from the decennial census enumerators schedules found only small numbers of railway workers outside this area.

<sup>16</sup> The percentage of railway workers living in households with a railway connection is probably even higher because many young railway workers brought to Derby by the MR were allocated lodgings by the Estates Office in the houses of railway widows.

<sup>17</sup> See for example, *Derby Mercury*, 9 Feb. and 13 Jul. 1870. This is partly corroborated from annual rateable values. Though only a rough guide, in 1880 a two up two down terraced house valued at £4 4s–£5 11s in the northern part of Derby was valued at £6 16s–£8 10s in Park, Canal or John's Street within the railway district.

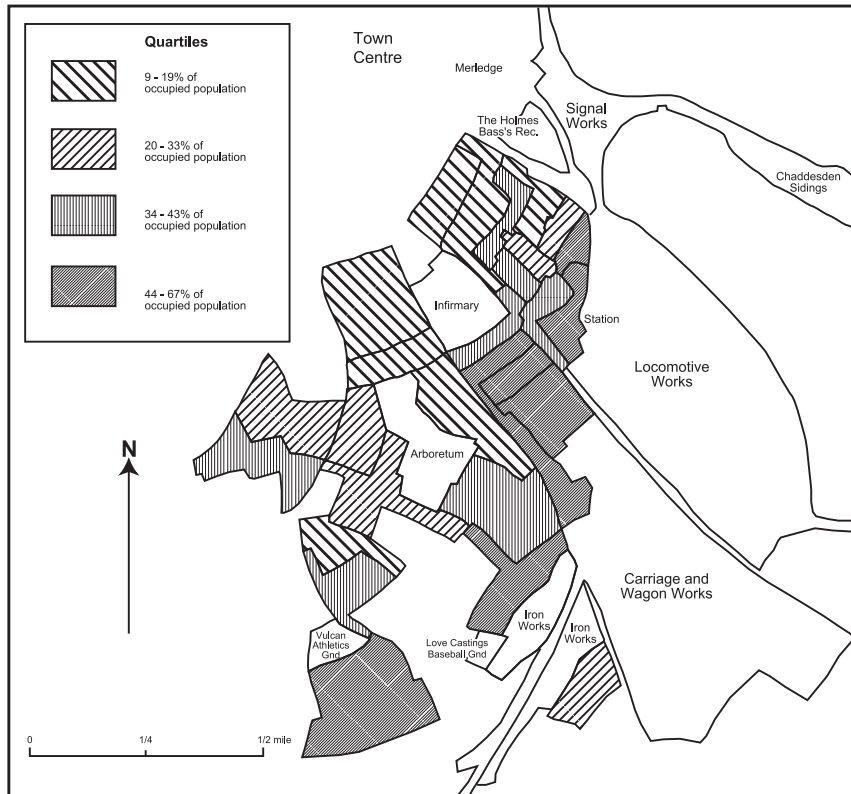
<sup>18</sup> Park Street, for instance, substantially developed in 1850, experienced a 34% increase in the number of households from 120 to 161 between 1851 and 1861. Based on a survey of households in census enumerators schedules 1851 and 1861.



**Figure 1:** Density of railwaymen heads of household, 1886

Source: *Bulmer's Street Directory of Derby*, 1886

The geographical concentration of the railway workers must not be allowed to mask a pattern of growing residential segregation within the workforce. This was substantially based on an evolving structure of residential status which predates railway development. The highest residential densities of railway workers in managerial and professional grades centred on the Arboretum and Rose Hill and the major roads into the town (Figure 3). These areas were the site of larger villa residences before the coming of the railway and long the preserve of professional and business people. The residential location of semi and unskilled



**Figure 2:** 'Litchurch', residential density of railwayman by Enumeration District (ED), 1881

*Source:* 10 per cent household survey from Census Enumerators Books, 1881

occupations shows major concentrations in the older area of the district and in the few enumeration districts close to the newer iron foundries (Figure 4). As might be expected, the new residential areas beyond the Arboretum developed from the 1870s illustrate much more homogeneous development. The distribution of the railway workforce cut across the diverse mix of middle-class and lower-class status housing to the extent that by 1870s they dominated the residential pattern of even the most high-status areas of Litchurch.

The relative mobility of various occupational groups within the railway workforce might be thought to have some influence on the experience of 'community' within Railway Derby. Long-term residence may result in social and family ties beyond the occupational group, whilst new migrants may very well cluster together as a matter of mutual support. In Derby, the railway workforce was substantially constituted from migrants. Just 9 per cent of the railway workforce were

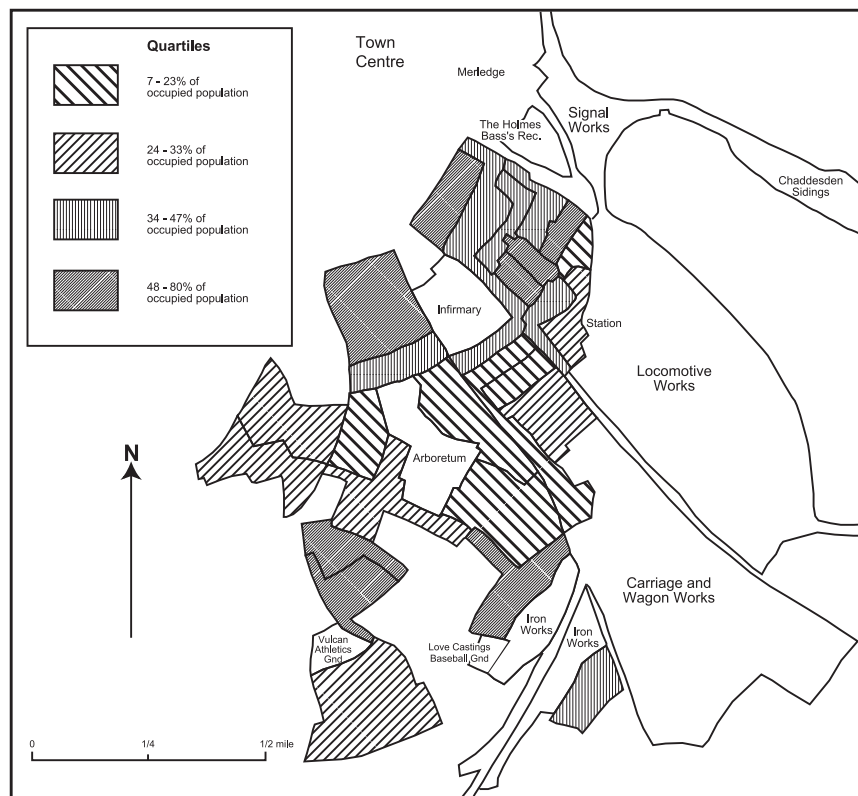


**Figure 3:** 'Litchurch', residential density of middle classes by ED, 1881  
 Source: 10 per cent household survey from Census Enumerators Books, 1881

Derby born in 1851 and 14 per cent in 1881. There were significant groups of migrants from traditional centres of railway and engineering in Yorkshire (7.8 per cent), the North-West (7 per cent) and the North-East (5.3 per cent). This is similar to the migration profile of other railway towns such as Swindon, Ashford, Wolverton and Crewe.<sup>19</sup> However, by 1881 there is evidence of significant numbers of workers being drawn from the South Midlands (6.1 per cent) and South-West (6.6 per cent).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> For 1851, Turton found an important group of workers from the traditional railway engineering centres of the North-East, Yorkshire and Lancashire: see Turton, 'The railway towns of Southern England', 112.

<sup>20</sup> For the purposes of comparison the regional classification was altered from that used in the printed census returns. This was done to pick out migrants from particularly important regions of origin for MR railway workers not brought out in the census classifications: 1, *Derby* including adjacent villages; 2, *Derbyshire*; 3, *West Midlands* Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Shropshire; 4, *East Midlands* Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Rutland; 5, *South Midlands* Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire;



**Figure 4:** 'Litchurch', density of semi- and unskilled by ED, 1881

Source: 10 per cent household survey from Census Enumerators Books, 1881

This reflects the extension of the Midland system south-west towards Bristol and beyond, which drew numbers of workers from largely rural areas. In addition, it reflects the recruiting drives conducted at Swindon and Wolverton to coincide with the large-scale expansion of the works in the 1860s and 1870s. The figure for the local born (14 per cent for Derby and 33 per cent for Crewe) illustrate a higher degree of in-migration to Derby compared with other railway towns long after the initial establishment of the works.<sup>21</sup> These figures are particularly significant when one recognizes that Derby was an established county town with an existing

6, Yorkshire; 7, North-East Durham, Northumberland; 8, North-West Cheshire, Cumberland, Westmorland; 9, Home Counties parts of Middlesex, Surrey, Berkshire; 10 South-East Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire; 11, South-West Wiltshire, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall, Somerset; 12, Wales; 13, Scotland; 14, Ireland; 15, Elsewhere.

<sup>21</sup> In comparison with Drummond's figures for Crewe in 1881, Derby has similar totals of Welsh (3%) and Scottish born (1.2%).

engineering sector. It is remarkable that the railway workforce was so strongly under-represented by Derby born. Perhaps an important reason for the differences in birthplace statistics between the railway population of Derby and other railway towns was the relatively small number of actual workshop staff. In 1881 only 45 per cent of Derby railway workers worked in the workshops in contrast to 85 per cent at Crewe. Figures suggest that various occupational groups originated in predominantly different areas of the country. This may well help to account for the diversity of source locations apparent in the migration figures for Derby. Porters and lineside grades came mainly from the rural East Midlands, South Midlands, South-East and South-West. Clerical and supervisory staff were also predominantly migrants and greatly under-represented by local and East Midland born. Whilst locomotive workshop staff originated chiefly in the iron working and engineering districts of Derbyshire and the West Midlands, locomotive drivers and firemen came predominantly from the rural areas of Derbyshire and the East Midlands.

Company records give evidence which supports the idea of long service believed typical of railway work. Examination of the Locomotive Department Salaries Books for the period 1864–72 and for 1892–1909 indicates that less than 0.5 per cent of workers in all grades of this department left the Company of their own accord.<sup>22</sup> As a result of an investigation by the MR Board of Directors several hundred men were dismissed from the Company. The mean length of service for these men was 43 years and a number had been in the service of the Company for over 50 years.<sup>23</sup> There is evidence of more occupational mobility at the top and bottom of the status hierarchy. Senior staff were headhunted by other companies, whilst there was a great turnover in staff amongst the labouring grades. The Derby District Staff appointment book for the period 1890–1901 which records station staff and Goods Department staff of the labouring grades, shows a 91 per cent (294 out of 311) turnover in new staff. This may be accounted for by the strong possibility of finding work at this level with equal or better pay elsewhere in Derby.<sup>24</sup> Figures calculated from the District Appointments' Book for this period show that on being offered a job 82 applicants refused the work giving 'poor wages' as the reason for refusal.<sup>25</sup>

Once resident in Derby the railway workforce as a whole appears

<sup>22</sup> PRO RAIL 491/1067, 1068. Based a 10% sample equalling 120 cases for the period 1864–72 and 220 for the period 1892–1909.

<sup>23</sup> MR Board of Directors Minutes, PRO RAIL 491, minute no. 8635.

<sup>24</sup> PRO RAIL 491/1033.

<sup>25</sup> The Staff Appointments book for Derby District for 1890–1901, which records Station Staff and Goods Department Staff, shows a 91% (294 out of 311) turnover in new staff during the period. This assertion is supported by Kingsford who indicates an annual turnover of men in the porter and labouring grades of between 17 and 21% on the LBSCR for the period 1858–60: Kingsford, *Victorian Railwaymen*, 39.

rather less prone to move house than might be expected for other occupational groups of similar status. Ten-yearly persistence rates were calculated within a group of streets for the periods 1860–70 and 1870–80. These show that persistence rates for heads of household with railway occupations were on average between 5 to 10 per cent higher than those for other residents in the same street.<sup>26</sup> The highest rates were for the Midland Railway Company housing in Railway Terrace where decennial rate was 41.5 per cent between 1870 and 1880. Houses here were assigned to a wide variety of grades from foreman porters to accountants who occupied key roles within the Derby organization and residence here confirmed the status of an individual within the Company. The high-status residential streets in the centre of the railway district and around the Arboretum also show high levels of within street persistence. Indeed the lowest decennial persistence rates in the sample produced figures of between 27 and 22 per cent, yet even these are higher than might be expected from research in other industrial towns where persistence rates of between 15–20 per cent was more typical.<sup>27</sup>

Marriage patterns supply some evidence for the strength of occupational community because they give some information about the interaction of workers and their families in non-workplace settings. They may indicate the strength and location of social boundaries between railway workers and other occupational groups whilst at the same time reflecting cultural, economic and social status differentials within the workforce itself. Analysis suggests an evolving pattern of interaction within the railway workforce and between the railway workforce and the rest of Derby. Figures derived from census data suggest that a significant proportion of railway workers either came to Derby with an established family or retained sufficiently strong ties with previous places of residence to formalize relationships at a later date. In 1851 26 per cent of marriage partners came from the same district of origin outside Derby. This figure compares with 18.5 per cent in 1881, still a substantial figure as a percentage of all marriage partners.<sup>28</sup>

The Marriage Registers from St Peter's Church, Derby, and St

<sup>26</sup> There are a number of ways of calculating persistence rates, some more accurate and labour intensive than others: see for example, C. Pooley, 'Residential mobility in the Victorian City', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, n.s., 4 (1977), 258–60. Ten-yearly rates may say very little about movements in between these dates during which people may move away and then back. It is also important to recognize that residential persistence within a locality rather than a specific street may be a much more important indication of commitment to locality and or community: see *ibid.*, 272–3. Decennial rates were calculated from the census enumerators schedules using surname and initials, occupation and age to minimize error.

<sup>27</sup> R. Dennis, *English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century: A Social Geography* (Cambridge, 1984), 256–7.

<sup>28</sup> Chi square tests by place of birth between railway heads of household and their wives indicate no statistically significant difference. A comparison between railway workers and an aggregation of other Litchurch occupational groups does indicate a statistically significant difference at 0.05 significance level.

Andrew's Church, Litchurch, were analysed for the period 1840–1900. These two parishes cover the expansion of 'Railway Derby' through much of the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup> The number of marriages involving railway workers in which one party gave an address other than Derby and environs declined from greater than 30 per cent in the 1850s to 13 per cent in the 1890s.<sup>30</sup> However, even the lesser figure suggests a significant proportion of long-distance marriage contracts. Dennis, for example, found that only 4 per cent of Huddersfield marriages in 1880 involved distances greater than 3 km. The overall picture is one of consolidation and an increasing number of family ties between railway families in Derby as the workforce expanded rapidly from the 1860s. The marriage registers suggest that by the 1870s the number of railwaymen marrying into railway families was over-represented by about 33 per cent compared with an under-representation of almost 50 per cent in the previous decade. In his work on Kentish London, Crossick found that the most important occupational relationship in marriage was that of groom to father-in-law. Written and oral biographical evidence from Derby supports the statistical evidence also indicating the importance of this relationship.<sup>31</sup> The percentage of grooms' fathers employed in the railway industry remained high at about 40 per cent throughout the period until 1896, whilst the percentage of fathers-in-law so employed almost doubled from 24.6 per cent to 46.6 per cent in the decade 1887–97. This suggests that this relationship became increasingly important in determining marriage partners towards the end of the century.

Like the residential location, relative mobility and place of origin, the marriage patterns of particular occupational groups within the Derby railway workforce were often quite distinctive. Sometimes these factors were clearly connected.<sup>32</sup> After the establishment of the new Carriage Works in 1878 there is evidence for a high degree of intermarriage between the families of carriage and wagon workers coupled with

<sup>29</sup> All marriages involving grooms giving railway occupations and fathers and fathers-in-law giving railway occupations were recorded for the period under discussion. A total cross-section of all marriages in these parishes was taken every fifth year. Unfortunately, marriage registers were not available for relevant Methodist churches located within the railway district.

<sup>30</sup> The problem of interpreting address at time of marriage was experienced and as far as possible where it was clear that this problem existed the marriage was excluded before the figures were calculated: see R. Dennis, 'Data problems', in *idem*, 'Distance and social interaction in a Victorian city', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 3, 3 (1977), 241–2.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, G.J. Pratt, *Midland Railway Memories*, vols I and II (Derby, 1924).

<sup>32</sup> It is possible to claim that the lack of local ties led to an insular detached attitude among migrants. Yet it is equally legitimate to claim that the lack of local family ties makes the migrant more reliant on informal neighbourhood networks for information and support. Whether such ties are truly affective or short term and instrumental as Anderson suggests is a matter for debate: M. Anderson, 'Indicators of population change and stability in nineteenth-century cities: some sceptical comments', in J.H. Johnson and C.G. Pooley (eds), *The Structure of Nineteenth-Century Cities* (London, 1982), 283–98; also M. Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1971), 101–7.



concentrated residence patterns. Within this group there was a high proportion of lodgers, some two-family households and evidence of possible family ties between neighbours. This evidence suggests the separate and possibly isolated nature of this group within the workforce. The semi-skilled nature of work at the highly automated carriage plant resulted in the MR finding difficulty in attracting workers for the new plant from the ranks of the relevant skilled trades. Thus the carriage works and its workforce enjoyed relatively low status amongst Derby railway workers. Locomotive Department workers also demonstrate a high degree of intermarriage with the families of workers in their own department. However, in other respects they appear more widely integrated into the wider community of railway workers. In contrast, traffic staff comprised a core of stable long-resident workers.<sup>33</sup> Their family marriage patterns exhibit a higher degree of marriage both to other artisan groups within the railway workforce and other occupational groups in the district. Perhaps significantly, this group were distinctive within the Derby railway workforce because of the high proportion born in either Derby or Derbyshire.

The extent to which son followed father into the employ of the Midland Railway presents further evidence of both the degree of economic dependency on the company and intergenerational social networks within the workplace. In the case of Derby there were perhaps more employment opportunities outside the railway than many other railway settlements and therefore the figures suggest the availability of some real choice. At a more qualitative level, evidence of intergenerational links within the same company suggests the sort of informal social ties by which the railway 'looked after its own'. Calculated from the census enumerator's schedules, as a percentage of male dependants over the age of 14 years, the figures for railway households with resident dependants engaged in railway work are 59 per cent for 1851 and 70 per cent for 1881. The many and various employment opportunities within the railway from labourer through various artisan grades to clerical and professional grades, draughtsmen and engineers separates railway work from other industries where there was a tradition of father following son, coalmining and dockworkers for example. In the railway industry intergenerational continuity in the same company could be quite comparable with social betterment. It is not insignificant that dependants were under-represented in the lower-status labouring grades by 50 per cent, whilst they were over-represented in the clerical grades by 80 per cent.

The Derby railway workforce was composed of people from many and

<sup>33</sup> Locomotive drivers appear by far the most stable grade in terms of residential mobility. Consideration of the birthplace of children as some indication of place of residence when those children were born gives weight to this assertion. In 1881, out of all locomotive drivers with children living at home 58% had all their children in Derby.

various backgrounds with a collective biography juxtaposing Black Country chainmakers with Somerset farm labourers. Writing in the 1870s this mix of regional cultures within the railway district was described as 'a veritable tower of Babel'.<sup>34</sup> This pronounced tension between regional identities within the railway industry has been documented by Alfred Williams at Swindon. Newcomers from rural backgrounds were taunted as only fit for labouring, when mode of speech and custom made their behaviour appear green and unsophisticated.<sup>35</sup> Numbers do not always reflect the power of a particular regional group within the workforce, as attested by the 'hegemony' of north-eastern born foremen and supervisory staff in the 1840s and 1850s. Though they only formed 5 per cent of the total workforce they appear quite able to control access to employment allegedly favouring workmen from their own region, what one Derby workman called 'their kith and kin', because they held key positions in the employment structure of the Company.<sup>36</sup> Taken as a whole, 'Railway Derby' exhibited a great degree of social heterogeneity focused on a core component made up from an artisan elite, middle-ranking clerical grades and a few senior managers. This has important implications for the development of social and religious institutions and practices associated with the railway workforce as an occupational community.

### Social institutions

Membership of clubs, societies, churches and chapels can give us further indication of the strength of occupational community. As with evidence concerning residential and household structure, it is important to examine critically the relationship between merely functional interaction based on residential propinquity and interaction generated through choice founded in some form of social and cultural mutuality. This section examines evidence for the role of social institutions in the formation of occupational community within the Derby railway workforce in both functional and affective terms.

It is clear that a wide range of social and religious organizations developed for railway workers in 'Railway Derby' including a Literary Institute, sports club, Wesleyan and Anglican churches, Temperance Society, brass band, first aid society, Horticultural Society, Volunteer Riflemen and a wide range of workplace-based sports and social events. To the casual observer they appear to be part of an occupational community based on a paternal culture of company-sponsored welfare. This was not the case, under the act of incorporation for this and other railway companies, funds were proscribed by law from use for anything

<sup>34</sup> Pratt, *Midland Railway Memories*, I, 3.

<sup>35</sup> A. Williams, *Life in a Railway Factory* (repr. Gloucester 1984; 1st pub. 1915).

<sup>36</sup> Letter from 'a later servant of the Company', to the *Railway Times* (1842), 1167.

not directly linked to the company's commercial business. One therefore has to look elsewhere for those responsible for community building activities within the Derby railway workforce.<sup>37</sup>

Without a single paternal owner to act as benefactor/father figure and without the legal resources or indeed the Company will to make social provision, organizations relied for their promotion and success on the activities of a few senior supervisory and managerial staff and the support of artisan and middle-ranking clerical grades. Here the social diversity of Litchurch and the long-term residential and occupational stability of many middle-ranking grades within the organization must have been important. At the same time many of the resident Litchurch manufacturing and business class involved in local politics and often active as paternalists for their own workers also acted in a paternal and philanthropic role on behalf of railway workers. As a result the social world of occupational community built around the Derby railway workforce often adopted a symbolic language and structure heavily influenced by the employer-led paternal factory. The institutions and practices of the community clearly reflected the sectional interests and differential resources of particular groups of workers. These tensions and stratifications became increasingly apparent after the 1860s with the large-scale expansion of the works and as the period of so-called mid-Victorian social harmony drew to a close. Nevertheless, some institutions and social practices retained the mantle of paternalism to the end of the century and beyond.

The Literary Institute was ostensibly the most paternal of social institutions, its management was closely supervised by the Company, the President was always the Company Chairman and the Vice-Presidents were departmental heads. The location of the original Institute, a house in Leeds Place, adjacent to properties used as company offices and the periodic requisitioning of Institute rooms as overspill office space testify to this. However, it was inadequately financed by the Company and originated as a self-organized 'Periodical and Reading Society', financed by subscription amongst the members.<sup>38</sup> The Institute was formed by six workers from the Locomotive Department and this certainly suggests the artisan engineering culture so important to the initial development of social institutions in 'Railway Derby'. Of the original petitioners, 265 out of 423 worked in the Locomotive or Carriage and Wagon Departments. Yet it is clear that the Institute soon became dominated by clerical and administrative grades. Clerical workers were over-represented amongst the signatories by 100 per cent. Of the 423 names on the petition only 183 became members, representing 36 per cent of the workforce in the town. By 1891 membership had risen to 1,110

<sup>37</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this see Revill, 'Liberalism and paternalism', 202–3.

<sup>38</sup> See M.E. Betteridge, 'Derby Railway Institute (1851–1901)' (unpublished special study for the Diploma in Adult Education, University of Nottingham, 1973).

and by 1895 after the opening of the new Institute buildings, to 1,956 or 32 per cent of the Derby workforce.<sup>39</sup>

In contrast to Swindon or Crewe, there were no prizes for academic work prior to the construction of the new Institute in 1894. Many of the classes did not succeed, a minimum class size of 15 and a charge for attendance were important factors in this failure. The MR brass band and a choral class practised and gave concerts in the lecture hall. Admission charges of 1d for members and 2d for non-members, in audiences up to 150 suggests the recreation of polite sections of the workforce rather than the education or even entertainment of the masses.<sup>40</sup> Unlike the Derby Mechanics Institute or the railway institutes at Swindon or Crewe, the Institute was unwilling to embrace sporting, or other popular recreational activities, like dancing. As late as 1883 a request to use an Institute room for a meeting of the Athletics Association Football Committee was refused.<sup>41</sup> Typical of its more successful events were the Mental Improvement Class and the Chess Club. The Institute was neither based on popular recreation nor intellectual activities, but it excelled in gentle and genteel leisure time activities indicating its dominance by the clerical and administrative grades. The Midland Recreation Club (later Musical Association) which gave musical and theatrical performances in the shareholders room for audiences of over 700 people exemplifies this polite bourgeois culture.<sup>42</sup>

The death of Matthew Kirtley in 1873 represents the high point for expressions of occupational community couched in the language of paternalism. At the same time it indicates the strength of an artisan-based culture linked to the key role of foremen of north-eastern origin. According to the *Derby Mercury*, during the week of the funeral 'the men at the works met early in the week and requested permission to follow their old master's remains to the grave, expressing a strong desire "to see the last of him"'. On the day of the funeral the works were closed for what the newspaper called the largest funeral that had ever taken place in Derby. Of the eleven coaches in the cortege only the first two contained relatives, the rest held MR officials from the chairman downwards. Walking behind in a procession formed in rank order were nearly 800 workmen from all over the system.<sup>43</sup> Matthew Kirtley came as close as anyone to fulfilling the role of paternal father figure and community leader for railway workers at Derby. An employee of the Company from its formation in 1844, he was a Vice-President of the Railway Literary Institute, promoter and senior elder of the London Road Wesleyan Church and lived in one of the large villa residences near the Arboretum.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 26–7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 38, and Pratt, *Midland Railway Memories*, II, 23.

<sup>42</sup> *Derby Mercury*, 24 Feb. 1875.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 Jun. 1873.

The social and economic power of engineering staff of north-eastern origin in the period up to the 1880s is reflected in the centrality of Wesleyan Methodism to 'Railway Derby' as an occupational community. The earliest social institution created specifically by and for railway workers was the Canal Street Wesleyan chapel. Its origins in the upper room of a joiner's shop in the North Street part of the NMR triangle of Company houses indicates its parentage as an MR chapel. Its chief promoter, Abraham Bailey, was one of the men brought from the north-east on the opening of the line. As there was some tension between this group and both local railway and non-railway residents, it is possible that it began as a social outlet for this group of migrants.<sup>44</sup> In 1861 a large new chapel was constructed in London Road. The leading role played by Bailey, Kirtley and others certainly gave this chapel the artisan engineering background characteristic of Wesleyan Methodism.<sup>45</sup> However, the chapel became associated with a broad spectrum of workers including clerical and administrative grades and others more or less indirectly connected with the Midland Railway. In this regard the chapel reflects the social complexity of Litchurch borough at the same time that the influence of other groups transformed London Road Wesleyans into a focus for social networking which operated across a broad spectrum of the social hierarchy.

Amongst the church elders were Sir James Alport, the General Manager of the MR, and C.H. Turner, a director and one-time chairman of the Great Eastern Railway.<sup>46</sup> It is not perhaps surprising therefore that, almost uniquely, the Midland Railway Company made a direct subscription to the construction and maintenance of the London Road chapel and schools during its earliest years. Also amongst the patrons and benefactors was Abraham Woodiwiss, Mayor of Derby, local resident, railway contractor and builder. The church was particularly important not only for the hiring of piecework gangs for the workshops and permanent way (railway track and infrastructure), but also for the recruitment to some senior management positions.<sup>47</sup> Little wonder the chapel regularly attracted congregations of 600 plus, was able to muster 1,400 in its Sunday school and was well known as a place to be seen if you wanted a job at the Midland Railway.<sup>48</sup>

Even when they took the Company's name, careful examination of some social organizations closely connected with the MR suggests many received little or no input from the Company. The Midland Railway Horticultural Society, founded in 1885 was patronized solely

<sup>44</sup> Pratt, *Midland Railway Memories*, I, 25.

<sup>45</sup> A.D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England* (London, 1976), 63.

<sup>46</sup> Pratt, *Midland Railway Memories*, I, 12.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 12, 25 and II, 46.

<sup>48</sup> B.A.M. Alger, *Derby and District Free Churches* (Derby, 1901), 91; *Derby Mercury*, 18 May 1864, 22 May 1872.

by local businessmen.<sup>49</sup> The Society's annual show was held at the Arboretum rather than on Midland Railway property. Perhaps the most notable example of wider paternal intervention fulfilling the role abdicated by the Midland Railway concerns the construction of the so-called 'railwayman's church' of St Andrew's in Litchurch. Though Anglican services had been held in an iron church located near the station from 1856, the rapid expansion of the Litchurch district gave rise to the need for a permanent church. A church building committee was established and the need for funds to finance the new church was brought before the half yearly meeting of MR shareholders in February 1862. The Board did not provide any money from company funds but did throw the matter open to the shareholders to contribute as their conscience allowed.<sup>50</sup>

Though there are no records to give a firm indication of the composition of the congregation at St Andrew's, there is much circumstantial written and oral evidence of the connection. A number of influential company officials were members including S.W. Johnson, Locomotive Superintendent, and W.H. Hodges, the chief accountant. Up to 50 per cent of all marriages and 68 per cent of all baptisms carried out during the 1870s and 1880s involved railway families. Unlike the Wesleyan church, there is evidence of a wide range of social and activity-based groups associated with St Andrew's soon after the opening of the church in the late 1860s. These included football and cricket clubs who played against a variety of county and town teams ranging in size from neighbouring churches to Sheffield Wednesday.<sup>51</sup> It is likely that Hodges was the driving force behind the sporting activities and it is possible to identify a number of players as MR workmen. The team played matches on the grounds of Osmaston Hall, the home of Sir R. Wilmot Bart., president of the cricket club and subscriber to the church. Amongst the organizations associated with St Andrews, such as the debating society, it is possible to identify MR workers actively involved. The debating society's yearly season of entertainments attracted concert audiences of between 150 and 200 and also at concerts given on behalf of the cricket club. Certain participants were leading men in the dramatic and musical clubs of the MR.<sup>52</sup> The church was closely associated with the Rifle Volunteers and Wilmot's involvement was almost certainly important to this. Whilst the Wesleyans took their children to the Arboretum for their Whitsuntide festivities, St Andrew's took their children to Osmaston Hall. Here, joined by the workhouse children, there were athletic sports, cricket and presentations in a quasi-feudal setting.<sup>53</sup> Information suggests that the church never had the popular support evident at

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 Apr. 1885.

<sup>50</sup> PRO RAIL 491, Board of Directors minute no. 3459; *Derby Mercury*, 6 Dec. 1865.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 Nov. 1871, 17 Jan. and 31 May 1873.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 Jun. 1872 and 7 Oct. 1877.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 May 1871.

London Road Wesleyans. On Easter Sunday 1883, for example, 284 communicants attended the three services. Given the importance of this festival, this figure might be thought rather modest. It accounts for just 4.5 per cent of the population of Litchurch and around half to two-thirds of the attendance at London Road Wesleyans on an ordinary Sunday, or less than one-quarter of the attendance there at a major festival.<sup>54</sup>

The organization of many leisure activities echoed the departmental structure of the Company reflecting and reinforcing the intra-company rivalries and competitive ethos rather than communal solidarity. Redfern found much evidence of this in his study of Crewe.<sup>55</sup> Sporting competition within the Company is a good example of this and centred on the Midland Railway Cricket Club founded in 1851. The MRCC was not given a ground by the Company, but did rent a piece of land near the station. By the beginning of the 1880s both cricket and football teams were taking an active part in local and regional competitions.<sup>56</sup> Only when the first eleven of the football team started to attract outside players and crowds of up to 7,000 did the MR start to object. Refusing to sanction a 'professional' team the Midland Railway Company forced the team to return to local football. There are connections here with the personnel who were prominent in establishing Derby County FC in 1891.<sup>57</sup> A complex system of second teams and reserves in cricket and later football and an annual fixture list of matches between teams from different departments developed from the 1870s onwards. Evidence suggests that manual departments were more committed to regular competition at the section and shop level, clerical and supervisory grades were more involved in both playing and administration in the Company-based competition. There is evidence that the shops most involved in sport were also actively involved with savings and sick clubs and that these activities were in some degree complementary.<sup>58</sup> This evidence dates from the early 1880s and like some of the yearly departmental outings in this period suggests the mutual support of working-class community rather than paternalism.<sup>59</sup> If the death of Matthew Kirtley marks the zenith of a workplace community which echoes mid-century paternal culture, then the success of the Derby Midland football team indicates the increasingly dominant role railway workers would play in the institutions of a consolidating working-class society and politics towards the end of the century.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 Mar. 1883.

<sup>55</sup> A. Redfern, 'Crewe: leisure in a railway town', in J.K. Walton and J. Walvin (eds), *Leisure in Britain: 1780–1939* (Manchester, 1983).

<sup>56</sup> Pratt, *Midland Railway Memories*, II, 15 and *Derby Mercury*, 2 May 1883, 1 Oct. 1884.

<sup>57</sup> *Centenary Brochure of the Derbyshire Football Association* (Derby, 1983), 7–8, and *Derby Mercury*, 25 Nov. 1896.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, *ibid.*, 31 Jul. 1881 and 1 Oct. 1884.

<sup>59</sup> Unlike those of the paternal factory firm, works outings were departmentally based and often organized by a Friendly Society or informal self-help club: *ibid.*, 1 Aug. 1888.

Only in the spheres of organized sport, friendly society activity, economic and trade co-operation was the railway workforce strongly represented in town-based social organizations. Most important was the Derby Co-operative Wholesale Society which was substantially dominated by railway workers after it opened its membership to all comers in 1860.<sup>60</sup> In this regard, the railway workforce with its core component of a long-serving artisan elite was almost certainly a major economic and organizational resource for working-class self-help within Derby town as a whole.

### Conclusion

The previous sections have provided substantial evidence suggesting that the railway workforce in Derby formed an occupational community in affective rather than merely functional terms. Though studies of railway workers have examined the substantial employee records of major railway companies very little work has been able to examine critically the well-rehearsed common-sense ideas concerning company loyalty and sense of belonging within the industry.<sup>61</sup> To begin to address such questions one must move beyond both the confines of the workplace and the familiar territory of the railway towns. This study has used company records, census data, marriage registers, local newspapers and other written and oral accounts in order to explore these issues in the context of 'Railway Derby'. Though Derby is as untypical of the experience of most railway workers as either Crewe or Swindon, it does provide an opportunity to examine issues of belonging, identification and loyalty in a highly complex and contested urban situation.

The MR workforce formed a distinctive and dynamic component within the residential structure of Derby. The census and marriage registers suggest increasingly strong social and family ties within the occupational community of railway workers from the 1870s. The extent to which household incomes seem to have been dominated by railway employment and the apparent absence of women's work suggests a high degree of economic dependence on the railway even in a town with many alternative opportunities. However, within this overall picture the wide variety of status levels and occupational groups within the railway organization produced a complex and heterogeneous occupational com-

<sup>60</sup> Formed in 1849–50 by members of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners and initially had no connection with the railway workforce. However, struggling for members the Derby Society opened its membership to all comers in 1860. According to the Society's history this led to rapid growth: 'As many as 36 were admitted on a single night in 1860. Railwaymen, in particular, came about the place and put new life into it.' The first two managers of the Society, John Riley (manager 1872–86) and Robert Hilliard (manager 1886–1902) were both former engineering artisans at the Locomotive Works: W.L. Unsworth, *Seventy-Five Years' Co-operation in Derby* (Manchester, 1927), 21, 29.

<sup>61</sup> See for example Kingsford, *Victorian Railway Workers* and McKenna, *The Railway Workers*.



munity characterized by intergenerational social mobility. There was a significant degree of segregation within the workforce in terms of residential and kinship patterns. Substantial groups of long-serving workers (including managerial, clerical and artisan grades) exhibited a high degree of residential stability. More transient sections of the workforce moved either from position to position within the company, or like some labouring grades to other occupations within Derby. Their position within 'Railway Derby' as an occupational community is much more difficult to identify.

A wide range of settings existed in which railway workers met and knew each other in non-work settings and to this extent 'Railway Derby' demonstrates the characteristics of an occupational community. Church and chapel membership is one example of this. Through the wide range of church clubs and societies which developed from the late 1860s it was possible to conduct a full social life within these protected confines. The broadening scope of church- and chapel-based activities at a period when both the amount of free time and the number of alternatives were greatly expanding has been recognized by historians.<sup>62</sup> For church- and chapelgoers the range of social activities gave them the freedom to mix with people of predictable and acceptable habits. The increasing correspondence between the occupations of grooms and fathers-in-law through the later decades of the century helps to confirm a picture of increasingly carefully defined and self-selected social worlds within particular sections of the railway workforce.

In reviewing the leisure activities of Midland Railway workers, there are evident differences between the practices of clerical- and artisan-led organizations. The picture is complicated, as in the case, for example, of the Literary Institute and the Midland Railway Cricket Club by the changing social role and composition of its controlling membership. White-collar-dominated institutions seem to have embraced the entertainment-based activities of sport, music and drama far more quickly than the artisan-dominated institutions. It is arguable that these preferences reflect differing conceptions of respectability. Representations of railway workers as exemplars of respectability which focus solely on career prospects and economic stability within the workplace are unable to recognize the differing and competing conceptions of respectability which existed within the workforce. These reflect patterns found in wider society by Morris and others.<sup>63</sup> They suggest an increasing awareness of the distinctive and differentiated cultural and social roles of artisan and clerical groups particularly from the 1870s onwards.

<sup>62</sup> S. Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis* (London, 1976), 164 and R.J. Morris, 'Clubs, societies and associations', in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750–1950: vol. 3: Social Agencies and Institutions* (Cambridge, 1990), 420–1.

<sup>63</sup> P. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contests for Control, 1830–1885* (London, 1978); Morris, 'Clubs, societies', 416–18.

In spite of the above focus on formal social institutions, it is hard to estimate the impact of these organizations either individually or in total on 'Railway Derby' as an occupational community. The total number of railwaymen actively engaged in church activities of any sort can only have constituted a relatively small part of the workforce. A crude estimate for the 1870s and 1880s would suggest less than 1,000 railway workers out of about 6,500 within the Litchurch area were regularly involved. Nevertheless these institutions, like the Literary Institute, may have had a disproportionate impact on the wider society of railway workers because of the way in which they helped to define the social world of particular supervisory and managerial grades. They may also have impinged more significantly on the lives of those groups who were hired on piecework or those looking for promotion. We must also recognize the importance of other forms of social institution, for example a number of public houses within the district, particularly the *Brunswick* and *The Railway* on Railway terrace and *The Midland* on Nelson Street. With a railway clientele based around a number of key artisan staff, these were important places for hiring as well as constituting the meeting place for friendly societies and trade union branches.

Though the Literary Institute could boast a membership of 36 per cent of the workforce only a small number were active members of this rather middle-class club. The Midland Railway Cricket Club may well have had far fewer members but because of the growing importance of spectating and the round of intra-works fixtures it probably impinged more extensively on the workforce. MR workers were certainly at the cutting edge of the class division of mass recreation where the sport of football was concerned. Even in the 1870s the works had a diversity of sectional clubs and societies related to different social and occupational groupings, particular offices and workshops, model engineering, photography, fishing, rambling, for example. The existence of these suggests railway workers actively spending their free time together outside the framework of formal community institutions. It also points towards a diversity of occupational groups with sufficient financial security and sufficient regular leisure to be able to enjoy such non-utilitarian pastimes. Perhaps this is further indication of a social world clearly breaking away from mid-century artisan-based definitions of respectability at the same time that it retained in outline many of its institutional and ideological structures.

The social dynamics of the Literary Institute and the MRCC emphasize the horizontal and sectional divisions of corporate life. At the same time they were inclusive social organizations which drew members from a wide spectrum of occupations and status groups. Often such social institutions existed largely outside the direct control of the workplace. The leadership of such organizations by senior artisans, clerical and managerial grades created considerable overlap between social roles

inside and outside the workplace. Voluntary institutions including churches and chapels, the Temperance Movement and the Derbyshire Rifle Volunteers do provide for railway workers, as Morris has suggested, a common meeting ground 'covering the contradictions and conflicting values within and between classes'.<sup>64</sup>

The urban complexity of the Litchurch district complicates a picture of director-led social welfare familiar in the nineteenth-century railway industry. Many local business and community leaders were shareholders of the MR. Given the illegality of deploying share capital for philanthropic purposes, shareholders of the MR and other railway companies were personally encouraged by officials and directors to take some moral responsibility for their employees by proxy. In addition the increasing political power of railway workers after the Second Reform Bill in 1867 provided local middle-class community leaders with further incentives to cultivate railway workers as a particular and valued constituency.<sup>65</sup> Thus acts of philanthropy apparently disconnected to specific railway companies often connect to a railway community much more widely conceived, one which reflects the modernity of the railway industry's financial and business organization. One consequence of this in 'Railway Derby' was a far from simple process of proletarianization or even evolving working-class culture as has been described by Stedman Jones and others towards the latter part of the century.<sup>66</sup> The first railway trade union, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, owed its creation in 1872 as much to the activities of local paternalists and political leaders in Derby as to the forces of worker solidarity.<sup>67</sup> In such circumstances we can begin to understand the emergence of labour politics from its intersection with versions of middle-class and artisan liberalism and their contrasting conceptions of respectability and independence.<sup>68</sup>

Traced over a period of forty plus years it is possible to observe in 'Railway Derby' a community which changed significantly in terms of its principal actors, community leaders, functional purpose and affective sentiments. The initial activities of north-eastern migrants, the figure-head role of senior management, the intervention of local political and business leaders, the consequences of intergenerational occupational mobility, the increasing prominence of non-utilitarian leisure pursuits, mass recreation and the developing power of railway workers in co-operation and class-based politics provides evidence for this assertion.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 419.

<sup>65</sup> Revill, 'Liberalism and paternalism', 204–5.

<sup>66</sup> G. Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class* (Cambridge, 1983); see also the useful brief overview in M. Savage and A. Miles, *The Remaking of the British Working Class: 1840–1940* (London, 1994), 62–8.

<sup>67</sup> Revill, 'Liberalism and paternalism', 212–14.

<sup>68</sup> See G.E. Revill, 'Paternalism, community and corporate culture: the MR railway workforce in Derby 1840–1900' (unpublished Loughborough University Ph.D. thesis, 1989), 329.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this is the extent to which new social dynamics incorporate and rework the cultural form of existing ones; the social transformations are never complete. As an occupational community 'Railway Derby' was never homogeneous, seldom consensual, socially and culturally highly textured, elitist, factional and a developing source of class-consciousness. It seems to break many of the conventional stereotypes of community at the same time that railway workers were identifiable and identified themselves as a collectivity. Amongst its few constants was the experience of railway work and perhaps more than anything else this study demonstrates the power of this social, cultural and economic reference point in the second half of the nineteenth century.